



Massachusetts
Department
of
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

fact sheet

Infectious Waste Disposal and Transport

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations, State Sanitary Code Title VIII (105 CMR 480.00) and the Massachusetts Solid Waste regulations (310 CMR 19.000) prescribe the management and disposal of infectious waste, which is defined as physically dangerous medical or biological waste, such as:

Sharps; blood and blood products; pathological wastes; cultures and stocks of infectious agents and associated biologicals; contaminated animal carcasses, body parts and bedding.

Transport of infectious waste is regulated by local Boards of Health, the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy and the federal Department of Transportation.

Infectious waste is not a regulated hazardous waste. Infectious waste is a special waste under the solid waste regulations.

How should infectious waste be managed at medical facilities?

Infectious waste may be disinfected or incinerated at the site where it is generated, or shipped to a site, other than where it was generated, for treatment or disposal. The regulations specify treatment, labeling and packaging requirements before infectious waste is transported to another site for disposal.

How should infectious waste from home health care be managed?

Infectious waste from homes should be placed in the regular trash. To protect trash pickup workers, needles, syringes, lancets and other sharp objects should be placed in a hard plastic or metal non-recyclable container with a screw-on or tightly secured lid. Before discarding a container, be sure to reinforce the lid with heavy-duty tape. Do not use glass or clear plastic containers. It is advisable to label the container "Not for Recycling." Soiled bandages, disposable sheets and medical gloves should be placed in securely fastened plastic bags and then put in the regular trash.

What requirements must medical facilities meet before the infectious waste is accepted for disposal?

To be disposed at a *sanitary landfill or solid waste municipal waste combustor*:

- The solid waste regulations require that all infectious waste must be treated (i.e. disinfected or autoclaved) to make it non-infectious and then be labeled as non-infectious.
- Sharps must be ground up or otherwise have their physical hazard eliminated.
- All waste must be labeled with the generator's name, address and telephone number.

To be disposed at an *infectious waste incinerator*:

- All waste must be placed in rigid, leak-resistant containers and labeled with the generator's name, address and telephone number.
- Untreated waste must be labeled with the international biohazard symbol and travel with an infectious waste manifest.

Any improper disposal activities should be reported to local officials, the Environmental Strike Force (617)556-1000 and the Department of Public Health (617)624-5757.

What are the transport requirements for infectious waste?

Once the infectious waste has been treated so that it is no longer infectious and/or packaged and labeled for shipment, its infectious and physically dangerous characteristics have been limited. It is now considered a solid waste.

If the waste is spilled during transport, the spill should be reported to DEP's Emergency Response Team by calling (888)304-1133.

Regulations governing infectious waste:

State Sanitary Code Title VIII (105 CMR 480.00) is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. For information call (617)983-6761.

Massachusetts Solid Waste regulations (310 CMR 19.000) govern solid waste transfer facilities and solid waste disposal facilities. For information call (617)292-5974 or consult DEP's Web site at www.state.ma.us/dep/bwp/dswm/dswmpubs.htm#regs.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 111 Section 31A requires local Boards of Health to permit waste haulers. Because specific requirements for transporting waste vary depending on local ordinances, the Board of Health should be contacted to identify special requirements for each community in which the transporter picks up infectious waste.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 159B requires that transporters of infectious waste obtain operating authority from the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy. Each vehicle must show a decal on its front bumper. For information call (617)305-3559.

Copies of the regulations referred to can also be obtained from the State Bookstores: in Boston at (617)727-2834; and in Springfield at (413)784-1376.

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